

A HISTORY

OF

PROVIDENCE POINT

HISTORY OF PROVIDENCE POINT

NOTE: If this History is downloaded from the CD in the jacket of this notebook, computers will usually file things in their own order, hence this table of contents is the correct order intended for this history notebook.

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INTRODUCTION

THE PROPERTY BEFORE PROVIDENCE POINT WAS BUILT

By Joan Newman – Resident of Providence Point - May 2011

The story of Providence Point, the spacious retirement community off S. E. 43rd Way above Lake Sammamish, begins over 50 years ago when it was “unimproved stump land,” according to Brad Best, a Providence Point resident who founded Brad Best Realty in Redmond in 1955.

Best provided some of the site’s history recently, as did E. J. “Bud” Dale, a resident and member of the Providence Point Long Range Planning Committee, who has located and preserved a notebook and other materials outlining the development history as compiled by early residents.

In the 1950s, said Best, developed land on the Sammamish Plateau was chiefly in chicken and mink farms, operated by local families such as the Erickson brothers Edward, Theo and Tuano, and Bill and Faye Sween. But Plateau property was selling so fast, he said, that although he created a color-coded chart to show how many times each property sold, he couldn’t keep up with it.

Owners of the property which eventually became Providence Point were retired chicken farmers Earl Miller and his wife Dorothy, and Walter and Monica Gwin. Best’s files show that Charles J. Johnston owned adjacent land and later granted a right-of-way into the property.

In the mid-1950s the Sisters of Providence were looking for a site for a new college for the training of teaching nuns. Best picked up the Sisters in West Seattle and walked the Miller and Gwin properties with them. “I’m a Presbyterian,” he warned them. “Well, we hope to convert you!” they answered.

Because there were no roads into the site, he took the Sisters up Duthie Hill Road and they tramped in on an old logging railroad grade which ran west through the property downhill to Monohon, a lumber mill town on Lake Sammamish until 1925. (The Monohon mill burned down that year, but was eventually re-built and operated into the 1940s.)

The Sisters bought 240 acres in 1957 and built Providence Heights College of Sister Formation, one of six major academic units at Seattle University. The College opened in 1962, combining a college education with professional studies which prepared graduates for teaching, nursing and other specialties. Mother Mary Philothea was Dean.

By 1969, however, enrollment had dropped and the Sisters closed the College. They stayed on to run an educational conference center, used by Boeing, the State Patrol and many school organizations for training and professional meetings until 1976. The property was then sold to

the Lutheran Bible Institute (LBI) in 1978, the Sisters expressing pleasure that educational as well as religious activities would continue there.

Other potential purchasers had been Pacific Northwest Bell, which wanted to use the buildings for an employee training center, and the State of Washington, which wanted to train state and local police at the facility. The legislature approved that purchase but it was not funded, according to the Providence Point History Notebook.

LBI, later re-named Trinity Lutheran College, sold 180 of the original acres to Swanson-Dean Corporation in 1979 to develop a retirement community, with a provision for continuing education as well as other amenities. A Community Advisory Committee was established to help with a Development Plan for Providence Point. Its members are listed in the History Notebook as Bob Small, then Dean of Architecture at the University of Washington; Bob Johnson, the retired sales manager of Panorama City, in Lacey WA; and Marty Wilson, a “TV Personality and Seniors Advocate.”

King County approved the Swanson-Dean project, stipulating among other things that Providence Point must purchase an extension ladder for an Issaquah fire truck because three-story buildings were planned, and must provide an “internal transportation system” to minimize the increased traffic to be produced.

Ground was broken for Providence Point in 1983 with Lt. Governor John Cherberg attending. The central “Town Hall,” with property management and real estate offices and a large meeting hall, (and later Stromboli’s Restaurant and now Bake’s Place jazz restaurant) was dedicated in May, 1984. Balloons were released and the Seattle All-City Band marched past. The first ten condominiums were occupied by August, by new homeowners from Seattle, Bellingham, the San Juan Islands, Bellevue, Redmond, Issaquah and Enumclaw.

The first residents were Pastor Erman Lunder, a professor emeritus from LBI and his wife Stella. Their previous home had been on a busy street. “The first night [at Providence Point] was so quiet you could hear yourself think,” they said.

The fifth residents, Archie and Mildred Gunderson, also wrote a short memoir for the History Notebook, noting that the nearest grocery store was “in Issaquah on Front St....QFC [at Pine Lake] was to be opened soon and new Safeway were something for the future.” Mildred was especially pleased that “one winter morning when there was a little snow on the ground, we looked out our dining room window to see deer tracks and two spots where two animals had bedded down...probably on their way to the lake from the woods.”

Today there are 1300 residents in 1008 condominiums in seven “villages.” The first organization formed was “Communiversality,” which is still an immensely popular, resident-run program providing courses and seminars over a broad range of topics and skills, supported by homeowners’ dues and small attendance fees for others.

The original campus acres are now owned by The City Church. The Sammamish YMCA conducts its programs in the Sisters' former gym and pool.

Joan Newman is one of several Providence Point residents who volunteer for the Issaquah History Museums.

If you have information to share about this or other early Plateau properties, please contact the Issaquah History Museums at 425-392-3500 or info@issaquahhistory.org.

PROVIDENCE POINT HISTORY

PREFACE

By E.J. "Bud" Dale, Resident, Hilltop Village - June 2011

Originally, I presented (at their request) an outline of the history of Providence Point to the Long Range Planning Committee (Feb. 1, 2011 meeting), as it had appeared to the Committee there was a need for a history of Providence Point. Because I am a long time resident (since Dec 1987) I was asked to do an initial investigation for the preparation of a HISTORY OF PROVIDENCE POINT.

After a presentation to the committee of some items and an outline of the history, the Committee voted for me to attempt a document. Rather than formally establishing a committee and assigning areas of research, I decided to do the basic research, outline the history, and when that was done others could be asked to contact long time owners and Past Presidents of the Umbrella Board and the Villages who are still residents here, to ask for their input covering the periods they could remember, to "flesh-out" our history.

Initially, after an unsuccessful search at the Library for a History reportedly done earlier, I was directed (by Ruth Chappelle, a long time resident) to a file drawer in the Village Meeting Room in Town Hall where I did find some things done by others as a start on a History. There was a one-page document I found with a date of Sept 12, 1988, which appeared to be the initial – and as far as I could find then – the only meeting of a Committee on History. There were some documents in the files, prepared by committee members shortly thereafter, which gave details on the property long before Providence Point was developed, including lists of some original owners and a few other "choice" papers.

After much time perusing these old documents, there suddenly appeared a couple of weeks later, in the Village Meeting Room, a three-ring notebook entitled **A HISTORY OF PROVIDENCE POINT dated January 1990**, prepared by a History Committee. Where it had been before, no one seems to know. I suspect someone had removed it from the Library a long time ago; heard we were working on a history, and decided to return it. It had a Library Index Tag on the binder - Ref. 979.777 Pro - so at one time it had been indexed by our then Librarian Alice Fadden.

The committee members who contributed to this early record were: Lois Beauchamp, Alta Edwards, Barbara Espeseth, Archie Gunderson, Mildred Gunderson, Greg McGregor, Herschel Jones, Larry Murdock (Chair), M. J. Reigert, Beth Rice, Dorothy Titland and Marcia Weston.

I have scanned the HISTORY OF PROVIDENCE POINT dated January 1990 in its entirety, including attachments, and it is now in this document as PART 1.

The second part of this compilation of history was developed by reviewing other source documents, news clippings, and reading thru all the issues of *To The Point* that could be found, which extended from mid 1984 to present (May 2011). These issues list all the Committee

activities, tours, changes in our government and major events of our history. All of these issues, and items of history are still available and can be read by any owner. This compilation then has become:

HISTORY - PART 2 - 1983 thru June 2011

During this period of developing this document, Joan Newman a resident of Garden Village, and a member of the Issaquah Historical Society, obtained some of our original information, but went much further in developing information on what the land was like before Providence Point was developed. She contacted Brad Best, a resident of Highland Village, who was the realtor that had the property listed back in the 1950's and brought the Sisters of Providence to the site at that time. They purchased the property a portion of which became Providence Point.

The INTRODUCTION to this history written by Joan Newman describes the progression of the property to its present state.

There are many of the original marketing papers and clipped newspaper articles in the file drawer we found that covered Swanson-Dean's early work to get the project going. The narration that follows will be a summary of some of those works, but mainly continues on through the time when owners took over the Umbrella Board (1991) and as each Village was completed. Some of the articles and other resources are appended as Attachments to this History, should anyone wish to peruse them. For now this record ends in May 2011.

It becomes readily apparent, and should be no surprise, that over the years our residents donated hundreds of hours to committee activities and other work to assist our paid staff. It is impossible to list all the committee chairs, committee members, and what they did over the years in this history without it becoming an unmanageable document. My apologies to any folks who have been left out, when there are references to certain committee activities. To list everyone would be impossible.

Some dates in this history are "best estimates", but they are close - no more than a month off. Sometimes it was difficult to find a record that gave the exact date, but once in while we came across an exact date to "nail it down", like opening of the Golf Putting Green on March 11, 1992 which was noted in "*To The Point*"

Photos of many of the resident activities are in a couple of large, well presented, photo albums in the Library. Large parties and gatherings were pictured, but few names are given, so we have not attempted to make those an attachment to this history. The albums are available for anyone to view at your pleasure.

It is the intent of the Long Range Planning Committee to contact Communiversy to see if it is possible to organize a "class" of students who would be willing to interview long time residents and develop their stories and add to this history. Such individuals could be the past and present Presidents and Officers of the Umbrella and Village Boards who still reside at Providence Point and were willing to contribute. Some long time residents such as Ruth Chappelle, Arleen Brown, Ruth Perluss, Chuck Bomgren, to name just a few, have already reviewed this history and have added comments and suggestions.

Providence Point owners should be made aware there is an outline of this "history" upon which they might build, if they were willing to take the time to contribute. All of this document will be saved electronically in a MS Windows based system, and can be modified quite easily. Efforts should be made to update the record from time to time, and the Umbrella Board should establish a method for doing so.